



Experiments of the Ideal and the Real

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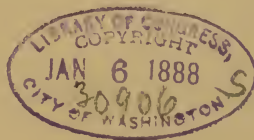
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Lyrics
of
the Ideal and the Real

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PESSIM AND OPTIM

PESSIM

To think! to think and never rest from thinking!
To feel this great globe flying through the sky
And reckon by the rising and the sinking
Of stars how long to live, how soon to die!

This, this is life. Is life, then, worth the living?
This plotting for his freedom by the slave!
This agony of loving and forgiving!
This effort of the coward to be brave!

Our freedom! We are sin-scourged into being,
And ills of birth enslave us all our days;
No chance of flying and no way of fleeing,
Until the last chance and the end of ways.

We are walled in by darkness—wall behind us,
From whose sprung dungeon-gates Fate dragged us in,
And wall before us, where Fate waits to bind us
And thrust us out through swinging gates of sin.

But what is Fate? It is a mere breath spoken,
To echo clamoring between the walls
Of darkness—blind phrase uttered to betoken
This blind Unreason which our life enthralls.

Out through abysmal depths of heaven round us
We think our way past orbs of day and night,
Till skies of empty outer darkness bound us
And place and time are fixed pin-points of light;

But nowhere from the silent planets wheeling,
And nowhere from the thundering hell of suns,
And nowhere in the darkness comes revealing
Itself a Fate that through all being runs.

No ghostly presence, no mysterious voices,
The midnight of these infinite spaces thrill;
And even chaos flies hence and rejoices
To find and feel yon universe's Will.

Thought follows chaos—nay, without the places
And times of matter globed and motion whirled,
Thought chaos is, a spread dead wing in space is,
Drifting for wafture somewhere toward a world.

Where shall it reach and touch the Will Universal?
How with its confines bound an Infinite Mind?
One atom of the Allsoul's whole dispersal
Assuming how the whole shall be defined!

Such thinkings are not Thought, they are but dreamings
Of what perchance may be itself but dream;
Our truths are to the Truth as moonlight's gleamings
In dungeon are to open midnoon's beam.

All worlds of matter, all the world of spirit,
How these are one, eternal, increate—
Soul can not clutch it, sense come never near it;
It is unthinkable, and it is Fate!

This awful riddle, wherewith we have struggled
Since the dim dawn of human consciousness,
With whatsoever dread words we have juggled—
Ptah, Zeus, Jove, God—we fail, we fail to guess.

Whether there be of all intelligences
A total sum, a comprehending whole—
Great sea, wherefrom rise all these mists, the senses,
And back whereto flow all the streams of soul?

Whether this lives, a selfexistent Essence,
With its own passions, wills, imaginings,
Or is but everlasting evanescence,
But perfume of the bloom of living things?

How cosmic spirit can take hold of matter
And give dead elements the living breath?
How gather into selfhoods, and how scatter,
To work the miracles of life and death?

Poets in grand imagination's trances
Conceive the gods and give them wondrous birth,
And martyrs bleed for Faith's divine romances,
And priests go forth to proselyte the earth;

But what terrestrial religion reaches
Out into heaven's majesty so far
That it can guess what god strange nature teaches
To the strange dwellers on the nearest star?

Is Buddha known to denizens of Saturn?
Is Jesus preached upon the Jovian moons?
And what are gods of any earthly pattern
To far spheres drifting in the Force-monsoons?

Yon sun's flame, in whose glare our worlds go darkling
To eyes that from another system gaze—
Yon flaming sun is but a glimmer sparkling
To like worlds blotted in the Dogstar's blaze.

And, howsoever gravitation labors,
It lets a million suns from vision slip;
While the ten million world-groups are not neighbors
Even by light's fine far swift fellowship.

How these immensities dwarf and obscure us!
What, what are we amid such scenes as these?
Our earth unguessed in planets of Arcturus,
Undreamed in orbs around the Pleiades!

By such infinitudes of distance bounded
(These chasms of darkness that no light can leap),
We seem a dream with glooms of sleep surrounded—
'Our little life is rounded with a sleep!'

OPTIM

Ay, we are dreamed ; and, if ever the Dreamer
Wake from the sleep to remember the dream,
We of His waking shall thrill in the tremor,
Dawn with His memory, mingle and stream.

What though He slumber through eon on eon ?
When He has dreamed all the infinite full,
Dreamed all the worlds and the lives there to be on,
Out to dreamed gravity's uttermost pull ;

Dreamed forth of matter and force interblended
(Storm-drifts of matter and torrents of force)
Cyclones of flame, globed, exploded, and rended—
Wide wild beginnings of Time's endless course ;

Dreamed out of chaos the suns in the spaces,
Dreamed down the suns to their white molten cores,
Dreamed off the worlds in their systemal places,
Over them dreaming the continent-floors

Out of their pulps of fire—dreaming the oceans
Out of the rain from their heavens of steam,
And of their mad elemental commotions
Molding the motions of life in His dream;

Dreaming the marvelous atoms together
Into the miracles feeling and thought,
Hitching, with matter's mysterious tether,
Selfhoods of sense to insensible naught;

Dreaming the span of the measureless chasm
Yawning between the alive and the dead—
Wonder of dreams in the organless plasm
Crawling to soul from the sea's oozy bed—

Feeling to soul in the sea's vital foment,
Feeling to form and to faculties dim,
Till, at the touch of a consummate moment,
Loosed into freedom to rise and to swim—

Swimming of dreams in the nightmare of waters!
Hydras, chimeras, and gorgons of sleep,
That by transitions of mutual slaughters
Play the dream-tragedy Life in the deep;

When His long dream through the spawning and swarming
Sea-generations has passed into things
Creeping aland, and has risen transforming
Into the slow apparition of wings;

When from the budding of nerves in the banded
Spirals of earth-crawling pleasure and pain
Upward has issued His dream and expanded
Into the glorified blooming of brain—

Flower of all the world's forces and ages,
Top-bloom of matter exhaling the soul,
Opening volume whose unopened pages
Yet of God's being shall utter the whole,—

Here from His dream shall He start into waking—
Dream of the universe waking in Me—
Me as a shore where the great billows breaking
Leap out of silence in sounds of the sea!

Here, in the self of Me, here wakes the Dreamer,
Wakes and shall wake as the brain shall unfold;
Here is the Christ of God, here the Redeemer,
Spirit incarnate that Faith has foretold.

Growth of the brain shall be God manifested
Here in the flesh, when the dead shall arise,
By an inherited memory vested
With the immortal life dreamed of the skies.

When, through heredity raised and perfected,
Faculties now in the germ shall have bloomed,
All the forgotten shall be recollected,
All that is buried shall be disentombed.

Whatso has ever with being been gifted,
Since the first givings of being began,
Living again shall be gathered and lifted
Into the sovereign consciousness, Man.

He shall remember all living and dying,
He shall think back to life's origin here—
Nay, shall recall when he hither came flying,
Seed of life ripened in some other sphere—

Brought by some inter-world wind accidental,
Or by some gravity's fated monsoon,
Hence to be traced by that form rudimental
Haply through all forms of life on the moon.

So shall he read the soul's mystery-story,
Turning the pages from star back to star,
Now in the gloom and again in the glory,
Till he shall come where the last secrets are.

Then, thus with insight illumined to seeing
All that has been, he shall see all that is—
Thrill with the pulses of all the world's being,
Make all the God of the universe his.

Yet shall he, ere that divine consummation,
All the career of existence have run,
World after world, to his last habitation—
Seraph of light on the ultimate sun;

Sun, of the globes of all systems compacted,
Orb, of all motion the center and rest
(Time to a moment eternal contracted),
Goal of all spirits immortal and blest.

They shall be one, though their number be legion,
And with one consciousness they shall revive
Into the bliss of that radiant region
All of the past that was ever alive.

Thus we shall share in the last resurrection;
So shall the mind of the angels recall
Us and all creatures, and that recollection
Be the salvation in heaven for all.

PESSIM

But this longing to live!
This tragical strife
Of us mortals to give
Our lives more of life!

Give us new! give us more!
We hunger, we thirst,
We aspire, we implore—
Give most, best or worst!

We inherit the ages
Of human desire;
Ay, within us yet rages
The older brute-fire.

All that is we have been,
Of air, earth, or sea;
Whether wing, foot, or fin,
One kindred are we.

In our blood flowing down
From primitive man,
Savage, saint, sage, and clown
Have blent as it ran.

All their lives are our life,
Their lusts are our lust;
And we strive with their strife,
Then—dust to their dust!

OPTIM

Dust to dust? No, that doom
We will not endure!
Us the prisoning tomb
Shall never immure!

When the star-stuff of heaven
From God was outwhirled
It was stirred with the leaven
Of life of the world.

PESSIM

God? And where then was man?

OPTIM

Lo, God and man one
Ere the fire-mist began
To swirl in to sun!

For man's wills and desires
Repeat and rehearse
Those which motivated the gyres
Of this universe.

Ay, and not only his,
But those of the whole
Life that was and that is
Of God, the One Soul.

Life eternally must
Be motion of Him—
From dull worms in the dust
To keen seraphim.

Every pleasure and pain,
Of stir in the clod
Or of thrill in the brain,
Is living of God.

Life shall vanish away
And finish its course
When He ceases to play
With matter and force.

PESSIM

Will He cease?

OPTIM

No, He never,
Till matter is hurled
Into naught, can dis sever
Himself from the world.

All delights and all doles—
Thought, passion, and strife—
Are the Infinite Soul's
Large living of life.

PESSIM

Then, on whom Faith has leaned
Lives not; for it seems
We are whims of some Fiend
That slumbers and dreams!

Unimaginable Demon!
With cosmic fire-storms
In His crazed sleep to dream on
And dream into forms!

Lo, a huge fancy runs
Athwart His vast sleep,
And ten millions of suns
Blaze out in the deep.

His deliriums dim
In meteors flock,
And with whimseys of Him
Wild stars intershock.

All the rocks are one tomb
Of moods of His mind,
Cast away to make room
For us living kind;

Phantoms! dancing and hymning,
While here where we dwell
Is but film overswimming
An ocean of hell!

Smoking peaks burst in thunder
And shower down death,
And the plains gape asunder
With doom in a breath.

Commerce rises and dips
 With east and west sun,
As her shuttles, the ships,
 Weave states into one;

But the sea, the brute sea,
 That swings round the sphere,
Never heeds the wild plea
 Of man in his fear:

Him and his its rude surges
 Toss, buffet, and drown,
As it yawns in its gorges
 And ravens them down.

And the beasts of the deep,
 Like phantoms that form
In the nightmares of sleep—
 Grim monsters that swarm

In the darkness of waters,
And gorge mouth and maw
With their mutual slaughters
By snout, tooth, and jaw—

How the swift silent beasts
In combat partake
Of the fattening feasts
The mad billows make!

‘Lord of life and of death,
Have mercy on me!’
Cry that squanders the breath
On storm, night, and sea.

Cry for God’s mercy where,
In maniac bout
With the powers of the air,
The great waters shout?

Where from mountains' pent hollows
Hell bursts out on men?
Where earth opens and swallows
And closes again?

Cry for mercy where thunder
Drops death from the clouds?
Where the ghosts rise from under
And mix with the crowds

Of the living, unheard,
Unseen, and unknown,
Till with mortal plague stirred
The scared cities groan?

Mercy! No, there is none
In whatever force
Wherewithal the Lord Sun
Gives life and death source.

‘Fire!’ A cry in the night—
One cry, and no more
Ere the streets fill with fright
And clamor and roar.

To the flames all the city!
Stop not now to call
That Almighty have pity—
The water has all.

‘O my husband!—my child!’
A mother and wife
In the first terror wild
Has fled for her life

From the room where she kept
Love’s wake by dead love,
And her innocent slept
Unfathered above.

‘Dead!—dear love!’ Off she flings
Whoever delays
Her mad purpose, and springs
Back into the blaze.

Through the flame and the smoke,
Past him lying dead,
Up the stair, scorch and choke,
To find the babe’s bed!

Scarce a moment to speak
One vain phrase of prayer
Ere the woman’s death-shriek,
And, framed in the glare

Through the window revealed,
A picture that robbed
Men of breath, and down kneeled
The women and sobbed;

Picture, flashed upon flame,
Of two forms in white!
Then picture and frame
One red blur of night!

Was it rage, was it ire
Of some god above?
Or, mad hunger of fire
For woman's mad love?

Woman's love! Love belongs
To Force, and is part
Of the rights and the wrongs
Of dull Nature's heart.

How is Force when it burns
And flares out its breath
Worse than Force when it yearns
And dares unto death?

What is better or worse,
Where all only seems?
What is blessing or curse,
In drama of dreams?

What is saintship or sin?
To climb or to fall,
Or to lose or to win?
The One lives it all.

‘All delights and all doles—
Thought, passion, and strife—
Are the Infinite Soul’s
Large living of life!’

Is it living of thought
Or living of trance?
And is purpose outwrought
From chance upon chance?

What purpose in killing
My darling, my boy?
What demoniac thrilling
Of infinite joy

From the little life lying
In fever's hot flame
And in last anguish crying
The mother's fond name?

Stricken wife of my youth! •
O, how from that day
Didst thou pine for what truth
Death's morrow might say!

In the hope of that morrow,
Thou, patient and brave
With thy burden of sorrow,
Soon went to the grave

In the travail of mother
Of that little-one
Who should follow the brother
Ere one year were done.

O, the faint pulses' warning!
O, loving last words!
In the spring, in the morning,
With songs of the birds!

I explore all the dark,
I search sleep for her;
But there comes not a spark,
Or whisper, or stir

From all hearing, all seeing,
All feeling of Force,
Hinting whether her being
Holds conscious its course,

So that still might be shown
Her dear form and face
And herself still be known
In time and in space.

As the rose, as the lily,
Yield up scent and hue,
Yield their ghosts to the chilly
White death of the dew,

Did my home's living flowers
So fade and exhale?
And have these lives of ours
No other avail

Than to feel, love, and think
One moment of light,
And then suddenly sink
In morningless night?

Is existence too rife
In earth's human hives,
That the Life of all life
Should so lavish lives?

Lives of men, lives of brutes,
They crowd to their tombs,
Like the leaves, like the fruits,
Which fall for new blooms.

OPTIM

Famine, pestilence, flood,
Fire, thunder, and quakes
Of the earth, and the blood
Volcanic that breaks .

From the hot veins of mountains,
And tempests that plow
The great deep to its fountains—
Does God, thinkest thou,

Heed of thee in thy plaint
That these never choose
Between sinner and saint
Where life is to lose?

Holy Jews, ye that priced
God's life, and decried
The immaculate Christ,
And him crucified;

Ye, with credos for charters
To hunt and to slay,
That re-sainted with martyrs
Bartholomew's day;

Ye that bloodied the ages
With myriad lives' loss
In religion's blind rages
Of Crescent and Cross;

Ye that fire martial leaders
With adulant breath,
Making mothers proud breeders
Of doers of death—

All the civilizations
Of man standing armed,
Nation fronting each nation's
Blood-hunger, alarmed,—

How would dare ye appeal
To God that He make
The brute elements feel
For your human sake?

God is you and in you,
As they and in them;
And shall one of His two
The other condemn?

PESSIM

Where is fault, then, or sin
In them or in us—
We and all we are in
Unpurposed as thus?

For be all forms and motions
Divine, and they seem
But the miscreate notions
Of God in a dream.

OPTIM

No! the seeming is thine;
For, could all the mass
Of the universe shine
Through thy little glass;

Could the Allbeing flow
Entire into thee,
So that Substance might show
And Essence might see;

Couldst thou know what beginning
To what end belongs;
Couldst thou witness Fate spinning
The Right out of wrongs,—

Thou wouldst rise from the dark
Wherein flesh is born,
And with song like the lark
Soar into the morn.

No! the dreaming is ours;
God's life is not trance,
But the sum of the powers
Of all lives' advance.

How we struggle to live!
God urges the strife
Of all beings to give
Their lives more of life.

From the instinct that lurked
In plasm of old seas
He and we have upworked
Through myriad degrees,

Climbing higher and higher,
With gain upon gain,
Till at last the soul's fire
Is lit in the brain.

In this upward progression,
Humanity's birth
Is the highest expression
Of God on the earth.

Yet the heavens are swarmed
With worlds older far;
And what lives, angel-formed,
May people a star,

Neither spectroscope's feel
Nor telescope's ken
Shall avail to reveal
To senses of men.

But these five senses grew,
As others may grow—
Senses so searching-through,
Brain facultied so,

Seized of force by such arts,
That mind may embrace
Other mind in far parts
Of infinite space.

Other mind may be there
With powers so strange
That our own would not dare
Imagine their range.

Can these pinholes of sight
Of ours comprehend
With what uses of light
High beings may send

The quick soul through the dense
Vast darkness of naught,
And by some inner sense
See us and our thought?

And to what fuller blowth
This flesh shall unfold,
What the grandeur of growth
Its energies hold,

Man can now no more dream
Than through his life dim
In the worm there could stream
A prescience of him.

But we know that we climb;

We see that we rise—

See how time unto time

We widen the skies.

From the ten fingers' count

Of numbers, begun

In the savage, we mount

And measure the sun.

Fabled Jupiter's nods,

That Nature obeyed,

And those gorgonish gods,

Her forces, which played

Chieftest part in mankind's

Last dream before day—

All the myths from all minds

Have faded away,

Where the Self-Revelator
Immanuel stands
As the human creator
By human love's hands.

God is with us and in us
(Within is above),
And our lives work to win us
His life by our love.

Whether I will or whether
Will not as He would,
All with all things together
Work only for good.

All the wrong I commit,
Mankind so unite
To exterminate it
They strengthen all right.

So, we grow by our sins:
 Iscariot betrays,
And the Nazarene wins
 Through all after days.

Lo, the Wrong that hath died
 To Hades is hurled,
While the Right, crucified,
 Redeemeth the world.

PESSIM

But redemption *to come!*
 What boots that to thee,
Thou for eons then dumb,
 Deaf, dead soul of me?

What is this we have dreamed?
 Whereto have we raved?
When the world is redeemed
 Shall my soul be saved?

OPTIM

Timid soul! thou art fleeing
False danger: fear not;
For thy sweet self of being
Shall ne'er be forgot.

Man inherits the ages,
And shall, with the whole
Of his grand heritages,
Inherit the soul.

There are times when far places,
Where strangers we roam,
Flash familiar with traces
Of some former home.

There are hours when such trances
Efface all that is
That we dream circumstances
Of past centuries.

There are moments we hear
 A dead father's tone
In our voices, so clear
 It startles our own.

We are writ in as books
 By hands from the skies,
And ghost-ancestry looks
 Oft out of our eyes.

These are half-resurrections
 Of souls that are gone—
Dim and fitful projections
 Of that coming dawn

Of all-consciousness, when
 In Man there shall stand
The whole lives of past men,
 So livingly scanned,

So remembered, so real,
So self-substantive,
That, no longer ideal,
They truly shall live.

Why is this a hard saying?
Heredity grows,
And the part it is playing
Shall never have close.

As the form and the feature,
The tone and the trait,
The whole self of each creature,
Are so destinate

From the procreant mold,
Shall mind not progress
Till by heirship it hold
All past consciousness?

And, if far-future man
Remember so me,
From the hour I began
Till ceasing to be—

So revive me, so live me,
So breathe my soul's breath—
What is that but to give me
Sure triumph o'er death?

O immortal my soul!
To live and to know
And flow on with the whole
Divine Being's flow!

O my soul! from the dark
Wherein flesh is born
Soar and sing like the lark!
For here is the morn!

SANE

Husband—What! have I been sleeping? Have I dreamed? Was he not here?—
'Dead'? Should I not know that? Murdered!—start not, all my brain is clear:
Listen, Agnes, to the secret I have kept so many a year.

For I must not keep it longer; no, when I am lying dead,
When the next year's grass is growing green above my dreamless head,
I would have you tell my darling what her dying mother said.

Tell her I was madly jealous—could not bear that there should be
Any shadow of a turning in her precious love for me;
But the lapse from love to pity! this I dared not live to see.

So I charge you, so I swear you, wait until the grass above
Him and me has thrown one mantle and the cooing turtledove
Mourned for me there all the summer, ere you rob my grave of love.

For my sleep must be beside him—keeper, you will promise this?—
Close beside him, in some semblance of the old remembered bliss
When I lay in those arms folded and all heaven was his kiss.

That sweet love of me was first love, and it wrought in him like pain,
Earnest so, and sad, and tender—O! the thought burns through my brain—
Fear not, Agnes!—I am dying—dying, and I *will* be sane.

Heavens, how that dear heart loved me! But I was a favored child,
Whom the fondness of weak parents had to selfishness beguiled—
Had made willful, proud, exacting, and with wayward passions wild.

Yet I loved him all my nature; and with tears mine eyes would swim
Oft in thinking, were there needed such a sacrifice for him,
I would gladly give my body to be rended limb from limb.

But right soon I felt the distance of his thought from thought of mine—
Felt his purpose to uplift me (true, it gave no outward sign),
And my selflove flashed resentful toward that love so all benign.

To my mother I was angel; to my father I was queen;
Why to husband should there failing, fault, or flaw in me be seen?
Why to him was I not perfect, with this perfect love between?

With such questions in my bosom rose my anger and my pride;
All my will I set against him, all his will for me defied,
And disdained to live his living, though for him I would have died.

I would be my self-creator, not a creature of his own,
In the fashion of his fancy made by him for him alone;
He should have me as he took me, crowned and set upon a throne!

Keeper, think what secret devil must have whispered in my heart!
I conceived he did not love me, deemed his fondness was but art
To conceal from me his feeling that we were so far apart.

I was jealous of his silence—made him swear it o'er and o'er
That he loved me, loved me, loved me, and would love me evermore;
Then with taunting tears I chid him that so lovelessly he swore.

He grew sad, and I grew sullen: some strange fury in me stirred
When we tried to speak together and he pleaded to be heard,
And I stung his soul to anguish with the woman's last rash word.

Never I his wish considered; what he liked not I would praise;
What he cherished as conviction I would scoff at as but craze;
And I said that, though I loved him, yet I hated all his ways.

He was generous, but human; and at times his anger rose,
In what words of hot resentment only Heaven's mercy knows;
And the man's uprising always had the woman's stormy close.

Thus unwisely, thus unwifely ran this violence its course,
Aiming to compel affection, bent to conquer love by force;
Till our travesty of marriage was but masking of divorce.

But our little daughter Zilpah was the rainbow on the gloom—
Tell her, Agnes; she may know this ere you lay me in the tomb—
She was like a rainbow on them when the clouds in heaven loom.

Yes, the darling was the rainbow which our love had seemed to send
As the token of a promise that the tempest now should end
And along whose span our spirits should together run and blend.

With the babe upon my bosom, though I would not pardon crave,
Yet the wrongs my words had done him, O! I knew he all forgave;
But I doubt if he forgets them in the all-forgetful grave.

While his hungry fond eyes uttered more than human lips could say,
Still I saw his lips were longing, if he dared, to give away
All his soul to me in converse that sweet morning in the May.

And he dared not! God of heaven, that I was so hard and cold!
That, so near his dear babe pressing, him so far off I should hold!
With my face all steel against him, while my heart for him was gold!

Yes, dear keeper, it was madness; in your eyes I read the thought:
It would be a thing expected that a spirit so distraught
And distorted out of nature should at last be hither brought.

Peace for us was truce of passion. O'er a deep of hopes and fears,
On a thin glare ice of silence we had glided through the years
Of the infancy of Zilpah—then the world sank drowned in tears!

He his whole heart lavished on her; and she grew to love him so,
By companionship and heirship so his own she seemed to grow,
That I feared to her his largeness all my littleness would show.

So I grudged him her caresses; though his face, grown pale and thin,
Should have pleaded me the hunger that his heart had famished in,
On his cheek the hectic telling how life-deep the pang had been.

Then, at last, I madly charged him with contriving to displace
Mother in her child's affection—Lamb of God! is, is there grace?—
Shocked he turned a sad look on me, and—I struck him in the face!

Hah! blood on his lips! 'O husband! darling! darling!' My wild shriek
Brought in Zilpah running breathless; in our arms he, deadly weak,
Sank with us, I wailing, crying, 'O my husband! do not speak!'

Through his parted lips came streaming the red torrent of his life,
With the struggling, drowning last words, 'Love me—daughter, dear—dear wife!'
Words that struck my brain and killed it, like the stabbing of a knife.

Out of earth I seemed whirled upward to the dead and frozen moon;
From the far-off world rose Zilpah's weird, low, sobbing, dying croon:
'O, so hard! hard! *so* hard, father! *so* hard, darling! and so soon!'

Then befell the blessed darkness; darkness with no ray of light;
Sun, nor moon, nor star of memory: keeper, how long was the night?—
No, not 'five'; for, two years surely, I the days remember right.

Seven hundred three and forty—I have counted them all through—
Days or dreams—I counted, Agnes; I had nothing else to do
Through the long nights, adding, waiting if the same dream would come true.

Dreams they were, at first, of Zilpah ; changed from dreams to days at last—
What! ‘all days of all the five years Zilpah here with me has passed’?
O my darling! can death bear it from such love to be outcast?

What! ‘you have an opened letter, writ to Zilpah by his hand!
Left for me to read if ever I should come to understand
In her absence’! Read it, Agnes, though it me with murder brand!

HIS LETTER

‘Darling little daughter Zilpah : Now let not your dear heart bleed!
Think of me at peace and happy when these lines you come to read;
Think how you were all my solace; think of mother in her need.

‘She will feel the shock more deeply, since, you know, we have not dared
Tell her of these fatal bleedings, and she will not be prepared;
So her pain will be the greater by the pain our love has spared.

‘You, my Zilpah, you expect it; and I catch your anxious eye
Always following your father; even now you hover nigh
Where this letter I sit writing, to be read not till I die.

‘ When the last comes, you will bravely for sweet mother’s sake upbear ;
I foresee how she will need you—if she die—or when or where—
Fail not thou to lay her by me ’——

Agnes, lift me ! air, more air !

Dying—but the letter ! Keeper, help me live to hear it all !

Higher—so ! Now read on !—Hold me !—no, no, Agnes, let me fall !

Zilpah !—Husband !—in the darkness ! groping, groping to—your—call !

RAIN ON THE ROOF

When the humid shadows hover
Over all the starry spheres
And the melancholy darkness
Gently weeps in rainy tears,
What a bliss to press the pillow
Of a cottage-chamber bed
And lie listening to the patter
Of the soft rain overhead!

Every tinkle on the shingles
Has an echo in the heart;
And a thousand dreamy fancies
Into busy being start,

And a thousand recollections
Weave their air-threads into woof,
As I listen to the patter
Of the rain upon the roof.

Now in memory comes my mother,
As she used in years ago,
To regard the darling dreamers
Ere she left them till the dawn:
O! I feel her fond look on me
As I list to this refrain
Which is played upon the shingles
By the patter of the rain.

Then my little seraph-sister,
With the wings and waving hair,
And her star-eyed cherub-brother—
A serene angelic pair—
Glide around my wakeful pillow,
With their praise or mild reproof,
As I listen to the murmur
Of the soft rain on the roof.

And another comes, to thrill me
 With her eyes' delicious blue ;
And I mind not, musing on her,
 That her heart was all untrue :
I remember but to love her
 With a passion kin to pain,
And my heart's quick pulses quiver
 To the patter of the rain.

Art hath naught of tone or cadence
 That can work with such a spell
In the soul's mysterious fountains,
 Whence the tears of rapture well,
As that melody of Nature,
 That subdued, subduing strain
Which is played upon the shingles
 By the patter of the rain.

THE END OF THE RAINBOW

There is a rare region
Whose heavenward scope
Holds legion on legion
Of angels of hope—
At the end of the rainbow.

Endure the dull present,
Its toil, moil, and sorrow!
We shall all find that pleasant
Elysium tomorrow—
At the end of the rainbow.

There the sky never varies
From glory to gloom ;
There groves and green prairies
Eternally bloom—
At the end of the rainbow.

The bees hive no honey
In that happy land ;
For the days are all sunny,
The air always bland,
At the end of the rainbow.

There Hope climbs the mountains
And rests in the sky ;
There Peace drinks at fountains
That never go dry—
At the end of the rainbow.

There joys above measure
Are blisses benign ;
There life's ruby, pleasure,
Melts into sweet wine—
At the end of the rainbow.

There Love from its madness
Of longing and moan
Leaps whole in the gladness
Of finding its own—
At the end of the rainbow.

No shadow Cimmerian
Of ignorance there ;
But full the Pierian
Spring jets in the air—
At the end of the rainbow.

There glitter the riches
That time never rusts;
There glory's proud niches
Are filled with our busts—
At the end of the rainbow.

Endure the dull present,
Its toil, moil, and sorrow;
We shall all find the pleasant
Elysium tomorrow—
At the end of the rainbow.

THE HEROES OF THE PEN

In the old time gone, ere came the dawn
To the ages dark and dim,
Who wielded the sword with mightiest brawn
The world bowed down to him ;
The hand most red with the slaughtered dead
Most potent waved command,
And Mars from the sky of glory shed
His light like a blazing brand.
But fiery Mars among the stars
Grew pale and paler when,
At the morn, came Venus ushering in
The Heroes of the Pen.

Not with sword and flame these heroes came,
 To ravage and to slay,
But the savage soul with thought to tame
 And with love and reason sway;
Nor good steel wrought that battles fought
 In the centuries of yore
Was ever so bright as they burnished thought
 To cut into error's core;
And in the fight for truth and right
 Not a hundred thousand men
Of the heroes old were match for one
 Of the Heroes of the Pen.

For the weapon they wield nor armor nor shield
 Endures for a single dint,
Nor glave withstands, nor bayonet steeled,
 Nor powder and ball and flint.
It touches the thing called Slave or King,
 And the Man doth reappear,

As did from the toad the seraph spring
At the touch of Ithuriel's spear;
And wherever down it strikes a crown,
Says sovereign to serf, 'Amen!'
'Amen and hurra,' the people cry,
'For the Heroes of the Pen!'

Hurra for the true, of old or new,
Who heroes lived or fell!
Thermopylæ's immortal few!
Hurra for the Switzer Tell!
Upvoice to sky the brave Gracchi!
Hurra for the Pole and the Hun!
For the men who made the Great July!
Hurra for Washington!
Yet old Time-Past would triumph at last—
But hurra, and hurra again,
For the heroes who triumph over Time,
The Heroes of the Pen!

INNERVALE

At the base of a marvelous mountain,
Whose hights human foot never trod,
There gushes a crystalline fountain
And makes a bright brook in the sod.

And the sod greens away o'er a valley
That opens where blue waters be;
And the brook with meandering dally
Goes babbling along to the sea.

There, snowy sails pass like the lazy
White clouds of a summer-blue sky—
Appear and evanish where lazy
Infinity fences the eye.

Here, asleep upon Pan's mossy pillows—
By Pan piped asleep in these groves,—
Dreaming Poesy hears the low billows
Breeze-babbled from echoing coves.

And here, while the leaves sift the sunny
Swift sands of the day from above,
The wild bee gads hunting for honey,
With wings wove of whispers of love.

Here the ripples make music like olden
Weird monotones thrummed on a lute;
Here the dark skies of green are starred golden
With thick constellations of fruit.

In this valley, alone but not lonely,
Beside where the brook-waters run,
Stands one little cottage, one only,
Dwells one little maid, only one.

Her blue eyes are clear pools of passion,
Her lips have the tremor of leaves,
And the speech that her loving thoughts fashion
Is sweeter than poetry weaves.

Flirtation, gross, flippant, and cruel,
Ne'er held in its tarnishing hold
The troth that in her is a jewel
For only love's setting of gold.

Though the vale is by sleep so surrounded
That her ne'er a wooer shall win,
On the side by the sea of dreams bounded
With her I sail out and sail in.

EMMA STUART

O, the voices of the crickets,
Chirping sad along the lea,
Seem the very tears of music
Wept in vain despair for me;
And the katydids' responses
From among the locust-leaves
Are the weak and wild regrettings
Of far other autumn-eves.

For they mind me, Emma Stuart,
Of the bygone blessed times
When our heartbeats paired together
Like sweet syllables in rhymes;

Ere the faith of love was broken—
Ere our locked hands fell apart
And the vanity of promise
Left a void in either heart.

Art thou happy, Emma Stuart?
I again may happy be
Nevermore: the insects crying
In the grass and on the tree,
As if singing songs of sorrow
At the coming of the frost,
Are to me love's fallen angels
Wailing for their heaven lost.

Often, often, Emma Stuart,
On such solemn nights as this
Have we sat and mused together
Of the perfectness of bliss—
Of the hope that lit the darkness
Of the future with its ray,
Shining like a star in heaven,
Beautiful, but far away!

By the gateway, where the maple
Of the moonlight made eclipse
And the river-ripple sounded
Like the murmur of fond lips,
There a little maiden waited,
Telling all the moments o'er—
Emma Stuart! Emma Stuart!
Waits the maiden there no more?

No, ah, no! Along the pathway
Grows the high untrampled grass,
Where the cricket stops to listen
For thy wonted feet to pass;
But thy footsteps, Emma Stuart,
Press no more the doorway-stone,
Trip no more along the pathway—
And the cricket sings alone!

A SONG FOR THE CRATS

There is hope on the banks of the Danube,

There is hope in the grand tintamar
Of cannon, and music, and clangor

Where Sultan encounters with Czar;
There is hope where the sway of the Tartar

Is swept down the bloody Hoang;
There is hope for the Isles of the Morning
In Liberty's bugle-twang:

‘Down, down with the Autocrat!

Hurra for the Democrat!’

Is Liberty's bugle-twang.

The blood that has flowed from old heroes
And settled in Lord, Prince, or Don
Shall be fetched to the level of manhood
As the current of Freedom rolls on;
For the world groweth weary of nobles,
Who mourn when the people rejoice,
Rejoice when the people are mourning,
And shudder at Liberty's voice:
‘Down, down with the Aristocrat!
Hurra for the Democrat!’
Is Liberty's righteous voice.

Yet it were but a change of oppressors
To fly from Blue Blood to the Burse—
From the Aristocrat's power of birthright
To the Plutocrat's power of purse;
But all, they shall all be down-stricken!
The thunder is in the sky;

It waits but for Truth's invocation,
It waits but for Liberty's cry:
 'Down, down with the Plutocrat!
 Hurra for the Democrat!'
And this shall be Liberty's cry.

The Autocrat rushes to ruin,
 The Aristocrat waxes old,
And mind, in Democracy's balance,
 Shall weigh down the Plutocrat's gold.
In the turmoil of mad revolutions—
 Mobocracy's chaos of wrong—
A firm world of order is forming,
 That shall to fair Freedom belong:
 Down, down with the Mobocrat!
 Hurra for the Democrat!
And the world shall to Freedom belong!



ASPIRATION AND INSPIRATION

We weary waiting for these glimmerings
Which struggle singly through the difficult rifts
Of aspiration from the overworld.
O for some breezy circumstance at once
To take the cloud off from our starry thoughts
And let their glory constellate the dark!
The spirit's brightest outgrowths are of pain,
As precious pearls are of disease in shells
At bottom of the deep. The slow, obscure,
Still process of the rain, distilling down
The great sweat of the sea, is never seen
In the consummate spectacle flashed forth
A seven-hued arch upon the cloud of heaven:

So never sees the world those energies,
Stern effort and long patience, which have stirred
In toil's humility and slowly heaved
Its darkness up, till sudden glory springs
Forth on it, showing like the spanning rainbow.

Think ye the lofty foreheads of the world,
Which shine as full moons through the night of time,
Holding their calm big splendor steadily
Forever at the top of history,
Think ye they rushed up with the suddenness
Of rockets aimlessly shot into heaven,
And flared to their eternal places there?
The vulgar years through which ambition gropes,
Reaching and feeling for its destiny,
Are only years of chaos, tallied not
On the memorial rocks, but covered deep
Under the stratified history of a world.

Celebrity by some great accident,
Some single opportunity, is like
Aladdin's palace in the Arabian tale,
Vanished when envy steals the wizard's charm.
But thought up-pyramids itself to fame

By husbandry of opportunities,
 Grade upon grade constructing, till its hight,
 Descried above time's far horizon, slopes
 With peak among the stars. Go mummify
 Thy name within that architectural pile
 Another's intellect has builded; none—
 For all the hieroglyphs of glory—none
 Save but the builder's name shall signify
 To the remembering ages.

Heart and brain
 Of thine need resolutely yoke themselves
 To slow-paced years of toil—need feel and think
 (A bibulous memory sponging up the thoughts
 Of dead men is not thought)—else all the trumps
 Of hero-heraldry that ever twanged,
 Gathered in one mad blare above the graves,
 Shall not avail to resurrect thy name
 To the salvation of remembrance then
 When once the letters of it have slunk back
 Into the alphabet from off thy tomb.
 Ay, think or perish! Marble frets and crumbles
 Down into undistinguishable dust

At last, and epitaphs grooved into brass
Yield piecemeal to the hungry elements;
But thoughts that drop plumb to the depths of truth
Anchor the name forever and forever.

VICTRICE

We walked where the grass was a checker
Of the light and the leaves of May,
When the Night in her white shroud of moonshine
Was the beautiful ghost of Day.

The presence that thrilled me with passion,
There under the moon and the shade,
Was a fond being, meek in her beauty,
Half seraph and half loving maid.

Her voice had the sorrowful cadence
Of winds of the night in the pine;
And her soul, like the mild moon of heaven,
Shone forth from her sad eyes to mine.

We had come unto where the world ended;
For out of the being of men
And into the bliss of angels
We had died and were born again.

Deep we drank of love's river Lethean,
Till the moon in the west grew white
And along the gray shore of morning
Broke the first purple billows of light.

As the inswelling floodtide of sunrise
Rose over pale Lucifer's gleam,
She saw in the drowned star the symbol
Of the end of our earthly dream.

She knew—and, O God! to remember
How she told me this with her eyes!—
That she never again should behold me
Till she met my soul in the skies.

O the pain and the passion of parting!
For she knew that I needs must go,
Nor return till the year were dying
And she lying under the snow.

O the pang and the anguish of parting!
When she saw, and I could not see,
Saw the seraphim signaling to her,
And her woman's-love hid it from me.

She loved me too dearly to slay me
With the tidings her heart had heard;
And sadly she blessed me and kissed me,
But said me no saddening word.

Sainted martyr of passion and victrice!
How to memory now thou showst,
In love like the dying Redeemer,
In peace like the Holy Ghost!

Didst thou hope I could bear it the better,
Not to see thy beauty decline—
Not to have the gall and wormwood
Of memory mixed with the wine?

Bear it better! sweet sister of Jesus!
When the sorrow of all the race,
The sorrow of loving and dying,
I remember was in thy face!

O the shock, and the fever and madness!
When my soul, into darkness withdrawn,
Felt only those eyes in the moonlight,
Saw only that face in the dawn!

But I came back to life and endured it;
I said, I will bear my breath:
Surely, I should bear love and remembrance,
Since she has borne love and death.

DISCONTENT

A little bird with a scarlet coat
Came fluting to me a silvery note,
As though it said through its mellow throat,
 Isle-of-Willows! Isle-of-Willows!

It perched alone on a lonely tree,
And seemed that it longed and longed to be
In the isle it sung of thus to me,
 Isle-of-Willows! Isle-of-Willows!

It thought perhaps of a little isle
Where blue the waters and heavens smile
And green the willows wave all the while—
 Isle of Willows! Isle of Willows!

Is this thy memory or thy hope—
Thy being's backward or forward scope,
Whereto thy little heart-longings grope?—
Isle-of-Willows! Isle-of-Willows!

It said me never another word,
But flitted away, this little bird;
Yet aye in my soul its voice is heard—
Isle-of-Willows! Isle-of-Willows!

THRENODY

A gap is in our fireside-ring
The wideness of a tiny tomb;
A prattle sweet as birds can sing.
Has left its hush in every room.

Our hearts long for the pretty charms
Of babish questions manifold,
And for the little hugging arms
Now locked across a bosom cold.

The bright hair and the eyes that beamed
So wondrously, O, how we miss!
And, O, the loving lips! that seemed
Fashioned so purposely to kiss.

As they who, yearning over sea,
Grow homesick for their land and kin,
So we grow heaven-sick to be
In that far land our love is in.

THE HAUNTING VOICE

The voice of a woman forever
Runs sobbing after my soul;
Night or day, day or night, I can never
Escape its mournful control;
Its moaning musical dole
Pursues me for ever and ever.

It comes to my memory mingling
With words it uttered of yore,
When its tones through my pulses went tingling
With thrills felt never before—
With thrills felt now nevermore,
Not even in home's holy mingling.

Says the sorrowful voice, 'O! my darling,
 Did love that being endow
 Whose prattle outcarols the starling
 And makes home happier now?
 You took the marital vow,
 And you gave me to die, O, my darling!'

So forever this voice of a woman
 Cries desolately to me—
 This voice as really human
 As voice of human can be!
 No matter whither I flee,
 Still I hear this voice of a woman.

Down to death and the sepulcher's portal
 This voice shall follow my sin—
 O, what if the voice is immortal,
 And, where hope's blisses begin,
 Shall come and welcome me in
 With joy through the heavenly portal!

CONSUMMATION

Death had sunk the world from under my feet;
Love had given thee wings to fly;
And we met as the dawn and the darkness meet—
Thou the dawn, and the darkness I.

My soul was a gloom that had blotted heaven;
And thine was a fine ascending fire
That streamed it through with a luminous leaven
Of hope of morning and day's desire.

Love wrought the miracle of raising the dead:
Though on the tomb the seal had been put,
Thine eyes to my buried passion said,
'Come forth!' and it came, bound hand and foot.

Sad memory drowned itself in those eyes—
Fell into their liquid deeps and sunk;
And the darkness of all the earth and skies
To those two crystals of darkness shrunk.

When we met our fate—rememberst the place?—
My day was barren, my dream was done;
But the bright warm flush of thy radiant face
On my frozen heart flamed like a sun.

That look! it created the world anew:
Thy presence came to me like the sweep
Of a full white sail to the sudden view
Of a shipwrecked man on the deep.

I knew I was saved; I knew that thy voice
Should sing the cries in the night to peace;
But I felt it almost a guilt to rejoice
That love from the dead had love's release.

Thou hadst never suffered, and couldst not know
How past and present in me were whirled—
How the breeze out of sunrise seemed to blow
From the sundown of the underworld.

But love is a god, and to him one day
Is a thousand years that are past:
I woke from the dreams that had flown away,
And, behold, they were true at last.

It seemed we had dwelt in the Morningstar
Ere the soul of either was born;
And I saw thy face in glimmerings far
Of memory's earliest morn.

The barefooted little damsel that played
With me in the splash on the marge
Of the blue Ke-u-ka was flashed and rayed
In the beam of this love so large.

Thy passionate voice, so sweetly that robbed
My soul of its will and made it slave,
Was the girl Fanny Wolcott's when she sobbed
My heart from me at her father's grave.

The victorious eyes that once I had met
And mistaken for heavenly blue
Were dark as that night I remember yet,
Because they were thine and were true.

Thou seemed the soul after death from the eve
When we strolled Miami's green shore
And heard the cricket and katydid grieve
That with them we should tryst no more.

The two strong loves that had fought for my heart
And at last laid them down and smiled
To divide and rend it to graves apart
Arose in thee and were reconciled.

From kiss on the sweet sad face in the night,
From tears for the night-wind's human moan,
O! the waking to find, in love's new light,
All faces, all voices thy own!

THE SHEPHERDS OF THE ADVENT

The tents of shepherds and their fleecy flocks
Whitecapt the billowy summits of the hills
Of Judah underneath the starlight. Night,
That solemn sorceress whose witchery
Conjures to view the mysteries of God,
Still Night went westering over Israel,
And Dead Sea, Jordan, and Lake Galilee,
Bethesda, and the Pools of Solomon
Glowed with her starry glory in their breast,
Worshipful lovers of a passing queen.
The breezes whispered softly in the palms,
Seeming to breathe portentous revelations
In the strange language of the spirit-world.

The brooks ran sobbing through the vales, low sobs,
 As if of angels stifling grief for man
 In the great hope of his redemption nigh.
 Bethlehem lay asleep. The starlight fell
 And splintered on her housetops. She dreamed not
 Of Heaven's preparation for her grandeur.

The shepherds watched their flocks. Upon the hights
 There of the lonely hills, there in the night,
 Where uttered patriotism was not treason
 Against the Empire—where the Brazen Eagles
 Had never come asserting Rome and Cæsar—
 There sat the shepherds, talking of the past,
 The proud old times of Hebrew history;
 Of Father Abraham, who trusted God
 As trusts the little child its mother's love;
 Of that Nile-cradled hero, him whose arm
 Wielded the almightiness of great Jehovah;
 Of Miriam, sweet singer of the host
 Of Israel, harping praises by the sea
 Of triumph; of his voice that so prevailed
 In heaven as to stop the moving sun
 In middle firmament and stay the moon

In Ajalon a day; of that brave lad,
 The son of Jesse, whose right arm God nerved
 To smite the boastful huge Philistine dead
 With but a pebble; of the heroes all,
 And bards, and seers, and kings—bright names that starred
 Their annals thick with glory; and, at last,
 Of that great name not risen yet, but soon
 To rise the sun of all their history;—
 ‘And he shall strike our shackles off, and chase
 ‘The Latin legions back, and fling from us
 ‘The tyranny of this Augustus Cæsar!
 ‘And he shall come in triumph’—

Hah! a glare

As all the stars were gathered to one blaze
 And flashed down on the hills! a rush of wings!
 And instant there before the shepherds stood
 An angel of the Lord. A great fear smote
 Their souls. They knew not but it was the dread
 Last day and Israel was summoned first
 To fiery judgment, as most favored, and
 Most sinful. But, with quick voice, like a harp
 Struck suddenly, the angel reassured

Their hearts, delivering the great Glad-Tidings;
And 'Halleluiah! halleluiah! peace
On earth, good will to men!' burst forth at once
With apparition of majestic angels,
That now, clad in the uniform of glory,
Revealed their splendors like a lightning-flash
Of rainbows, up, rank over rank, until
The narrowing vista of their radiant lines
Seemed closed upon the very throne of God;
And 'Halleluiah! halleluiah!' pealed
With all their voices, wonderfully loud—
Loud as a roar of mountain-thunderbolts,
Yet sweeter than a silvery symphony
Of quiring flutes at midnight on the sea.

Quick as a change in dreams the vault was vacant
Again of all except the stars. The shepherds
Leapt from their kneeling. Heaven beckoned them
To Bethlehem. They followed, groping through
Their tears of joy; and where the star sank low
And stopt they found the mother and the babe.

IMMORTALITY

How many of the bright names now that seem
In fame's high heaven fixed eternal spheres
Shall hold their faint reflections in the stream
Of memory ten hundred thousand years?

Who knows but we are in the night and yet
There is a universal sun to rise,
When all these twinkling stars of fame shall set,
Or fade into the nothingness of skies?

Mankind may climb the pyramid of soul,
Up by the stairflight of the centuries,
So high that they shall hear the anthems roll
Of seraphim, and see where heaven is.

And then the loud huzzas of these low times,
That send up great names, may not strike their ears,
Enraptured with the fugues of upper climes
And with the silent music of the spheres.

The highest peaks of glory now that rise
May yet be whelmed rocks in that spirit-sea
On whose floodtide upfloating toward the skies
The ark of raised humanity shall be.

Names, voices, die; ay, letters that enshrine
Their corpses have at last their burial-day;
But thoughts, which are their spirits, hold divine
Existence, and shall never pass away.

No drop of thought once mingled with the sea
Of soul shall perish, though it disappear;
The vapor into which it dies may be
Born into rainbow in some other year.

Or, rising in its darkness, it may swell
Some thundercloud of passion yet to loom;
For thought, of heaven born or born of hell,
Doubles itself for aye in gleam or gloom.

FREEDMEN'S BATTLE-HYMN

O, to the Lord be glory! halleluiah to the Lord!
He hath stricken off our shackles and hath given us the sword
To do the righteous judgment of his everlasting Word,
As we go marching on.
Glory, glory Halleluiah!

We had waited for his token of deliverance so long
That we feared he had forgotten our two hundred years of wrong;
But at last we hear his signal in the battle-bugle's song,
And we go marching on.

Ho! fathers, brothers, slaving in the cotton and the corn!
O! wives and daughters wishing that ye never had been born!
We are your armed redeemers, and we lead the hope-forlorn,
As we go marching on.

For God hath made this people by the light of battle see
That death is on the Nation if the bond do not go free—
That by the sword of Freedmen shall the land regenerate be;
And we go marching on.

Then watch and pray, dear kindred!—when ye hear the battle-cry
Look for Freedom's Dark Crusaders where the Union-banners fly,
And to the Lord give glory! for his kingdom cometh nigh,
As we go marching on.
Glory, glory halleluiah!

1863.

DUTY HERE AND GLORY THERE

Darkness that my heart could feel of,
Blackness that my soul could swim in,
Drowned in me the living spirit,

Strength to hope and will to dare;
Murder-shrieks that shock the midnight,
And that pierce, and pang, and sicken,
Would have brought me grateful respite

From that death, that death despair;
When a preternatural whisper—
Words that sounded not, but touched me—
Seemed to utter through me to me,

‘Duty here and glory there!’

Where? My soul looked round and questioned:
Boom of thunder-throated cannon,
Clash of steel, and clang of music
 Strove in vain to answer where.
Then loud senatorial voices,
Stormy with a people's passion,
Swollen with a nation's power,
 Seemed grand answers in the air.
But the cannon, and the clashing,
And the music, and the voices
Never echoed to that whisper,
 'Duty here and glory there!'

Showers of delicious praises,
Falling on the panting spirit
Like the cooling rains of summer,
 Cherishing great souls that bear
Thought's immortal bloom of beauty,
Wafting round the world the fragrance

Of their names—Ambition questioned,
‘Worth not these the weary wear,
Through a lifelong toil and patience,
Wear of soul and wear of body?’
No response in that felt whisper,
‘Duty here and glory there!’

Where? My soul looked up and questioned—
Up to where the stars were burning
In the grand and awful temple
Of the midnight—up to where
Vision stops against the curtain
Of the infinite, but spirit
Puts aside the vail and enters :
It is there! O, it is there!
Thrilled the whisper through my being,
‘Duty here for little lifetimes,
Glory there for endless ages—
Duty here and glory there!’

EPITHALAMIUM

A brook and a river—
A crystalline brook
From a sybilline nook
And a silvery river—
Flow into a lake,
In which beautiful lake
Are mirrored all bright things above :
The brook is a life,
And the river a life,
And the lake is the Lake of Love.

And out of its bosom
A stream fills and flows
And oceanward goes—
From out the lake's bosom

One stream to the sea ;
And this infinite sea,
That ever mysteriously rolls
Against Time's either shore,
It is named Evermore,
And the stream named Espousal of Souls.

So the two, brook and river,
From the Lake of Love run ;
Two lives from the Giver
Giving back to Him one.

When two lives, so wed, from single
Into double being flow—
When two souls, so one, commingle,
In their hearts this truth shall grow :
Love is more than starry lusters
Round the honeymoon at rise ;
Over all the skies it clusters,
East and west and middle skies.

THE BROOK-SONG

In shadowy nook,
Where the green leaves grow,
Flow, beautiful brook,
From thy cool fount flow:
Brook, babble, babble, brook,
Flow, flow, brook, flow—
Flow, brook, babble, brook,
From thy cool fount flow.

How the foamy flocks
Of thy waters go
Along the rough rocks
In a steep fleet flow!

Flocks, follow, follow flocks,
Flow, flow, brook, flow—
Flow, flocks, follow flocks
In a steep fleet flow.

With many a crook
Through the vale below,
Where the elms overlook
And the wild flowers blow,
Brook, murmur, murmur, brook,
Flow, flow, brook, flow—
Flow, brook, murmur, brook,
Where the wild flowers blow.

Flow on to the sea,
Silver brook, and show
Our lives how they flee
To the Dead-Sea's flow—
Flee, stilly, fleetly flee—
Flow, flow, brook, flow—
Our lives how they flee
To the Dead-Sea's flow.

BABY FANNY

Her hair was a cluster
Of glooms and of gleams,
And her eyes had the luster
That stars have in dreams.

The busiest rover
That buzzes and sips
Never found honeyed clover
Like Fanny's red lips.

Her cheeks were ripe peaches,
Her voice was a bird's,
Making sweet little speeches
Without any words.

So near the dear lisper
To heaven was kept
That the angels could whisper
To her as she slept.

Too near! for her smiling,
In dreams as she lay,
Showed they were beguiling
Her spirit away.

‘Come, heavenly sister!’
One mild angel saith;
But a bolder one kissed her—
Bold Angel of Death!

THE LAND REDEEMED

Not always shall the good earth be
To man's use under ban;
The land shall be redeemed at last
And rendered back to man:
Then each shall of the acres hold
Enough to make him free;
None shall usurp more than his need,
And none shall landless be.

The system of old feudal wrong
That makes the people pay
For room to live upon the earth
Shall fade and fall away;

The name of landlord shall become
A mockery and scoff,
As rolls the tide of human rights
To sweep his landmarks off.

For man shall yet perceive the truth—
Through old tradition dim—
That record, scroll, nor parchment writ
Can take the earth from him;
That nature makes a title-deed
To each one for his time
In his own want, and who takes more
He perpetrates a crime.

This living truth shall flush the cheek
Of pale Starvation red,
As over old ancestral parks
The pauper's sheaves are spread;
This truth shall wrest from blood and birth
The scepter and the crown,
And, leveling the Workers up,
The Drones shall level down.

Then prince and peasant side by side
Shall strive, with heart and brain,
By doing highest work for man
The highest rank to gain;
For, when each has his human right
Of home upon the soil,
The Worker shall be prince and king—
God's Nobleman of Toil!

Glad time of earth's beatitude!
When none shall hoard or steal,
But all mankind together work
For universal weal;
When war no more shall shock the land
Or thunder on the sea,
But by the Golden Rule of Christ
All wrongs shall righted be.

MY LORD

Ennobled? O Lord Alfred Tennyson!—

Now dare the curse, dig Shakspeare's bones
From underneath the Stratford-stones
And with a lordship prank the skeleton!

Men well may jeer and ask how thou hast gained
The right to have thy race renewed
And thy old Saxon red blood blued
By royal warrant, clarified, and strained.

What hast thou done that goes to make a lord?
The greatness by estate-in-tail
Which Nature gives the first-born male
Thou canst not claim as Art's reward.

Is not true greatness, like the poet, born?
Nobility of pedigree
May well by birthright look on thee
With half a dozen centuries of scorn.

Where are thy old manorial parks and halls,
A king's gift to a courtier's smile,
Or loot of French braves when the Isle
Was theirs and Englishmen were churls and thralls?

Where is the half-mile's length of corridor
'Lined each side with thy pictured row
Of ancestors, whose grand airs show
The highness born above the need to soar?

With none of these beginnings, dost thou dare
To ape the greatness of the great?
Can Genius ancestors create—
Make old halls of its castles-in-the-air?

Genius may work its miracles with time—
May make past present and forelive
The future; but it cannot give
Blood-heirship of antiquity sublime.

But shall Caste's colorless anachronism
Change to the rainbow's living hues
And glory to thy sons diffuse
By being passed through thy poetic prism?

Pity the son with intellect too numb
To see that thy one natal word
Surnames him over all absurd
Tinsel of titles known to Christendom!

MADONNA

Hail, O Madonna! my woman, my lady!

Mine by my poesy, mine by my dreams!

Not as a nymph of the leafily shady

Myth of the wilderness, nor as the limbs

Nude of a naiad in fountains and streams

Glimpsed as she flashes, and plashes, and swims,
But as a real live woman, Madonna!

Future-forefeeling old poets, then seeing

Nowhere in all the world lady like mine,

Feigned an ideal aerial being,

Oread or dryad, that, piped to by Pan,

Danced in the solitudes, where the divine

Passion of beauty has visited man

Always in guise of my woman, Madonna!

Or the delicious keen charm of illusion
 (Rapturous chase of the soul after sense)
Fabled they, dreaming the plunge and the fusion
 Into clear waters of womanly shapes:
 Bosoms that hid in the crystal defense,
 Bodies that made hurried bashful escapes
Into the fountains, revealed thee, Madonna!

Thou art the mystery, thou art the beauty,
 Left to the world from the world's age of gold;
Thou art the thought holding heroes to duty;
 Thou art that secret in music and rhyme
 Which has been guessed at, but never been told;
 Thou art the dreamed-of and longed-for of time,
Glory of womanhood, lady Madonna!

ALONE

Alone! alone!
Forth out of the darkness,
Back into the darkness,
We come and we go alone.

O birth! O death!
Lone cry from the midnight,
Moan lost in the midnight,
A catch and a lapse of breath!

O youth! fleet dream!
We sleep out of heaven,
We dream down from heaven,
Then wake from the fleeting dream.

No more! no more!
Youth's gladness of living,
Love's madness of living,
Can come back to me no more.

Those glad, mad years!
How, dancing and singing,
How danced and went winging
Those passionate choral years!

To be! to live!
What being, what living,
What largess of living
The blood of the boy can give!

O earth! O heaven!
Earth glad with all beauty,
And no hint of duty
From all the glad blue of heaven!

Sun, moon, and stars!
Lakes, woods with birds flying
Through them, and the crying
Of insects beneath the stars!

Then life in love!
Life's torrent-stream steadied,
Stopt, flowed back, and eddied
About in the pool of love.

From boy to man!
Bridge built of a rainbow—
Love's luminous rainbow,
Which fadeth from boy to man.

Love's fading bow!
Still following hither,
I follow on whither
It lures me and I must go.

Yes, follow on!
Love's rainbow-ideal,
So nigh and so real,
Still flies, but I follow on.

For love is all!
Hope, pleasure, ambition,
Fame's fullest fruition,
Are nothing; for love is all.

But age grows lone!
For age is unlovely—
Age wins not the lovely;—
We go as we came, alone.

Alone! alone!
Forth out of the darkness,
Back into the darkness,
We come and we go alone.

SHIPS COMING IN.

I lay upon a rock that jutted to the sea.
Twilight came down out of the pine-woods back of me,
And, stealing on the waters, met the sudden moon,
Rushed into her kiss, and sank to a dead white swoon.
Then forthwith all the ocean's flat marmorean floor
Ran to a silver flux and melted to the shore.
The light was an eddy of day back hither swirled
(The haunting ghost of light from the tomb of a world),
That made all the skied amphitheater a scene

Of mystery in shadow and glory in sheen.

I lay there on the rock and thought of all had been,

I lay and watched my ships come in, my ships come in.

Sail, O ships! my home-voyaging ships!

Sail from the sunlit side of the world;

Climb the watery bulge of the globe;

Pass the line where the orient dips

In the sea, and, with canvas unfurled,

Take yon moon's glory on as a robe :

From wherever your sailing has been,

Sail, ships, hither, sail hither, sail in.

Ship! that flew out of port with thy wings
Dipt in morning, is yon phantom thou—
Moonlit phantom that drifts to the strand
And no freight and no passenger brings?
Yet see! one there alive on the prow,
In his gaze the sick hunger for land:
Hope! my Captain! that sailed out to win
All our world—conquered Captain, sail in.

Ship! that pushed to the tropical zone,
Touched spice-islands in summery seas,
Then, in mad equatorial gales,
Went adrift with one mariner lone—
Bring him back from the sunned Caribbees,
Bring him in with thy storm-tattered sails:
Love! my Sailor! once life's happy twin,
Now sweet ghost of life, specter! sail in.

Ship! that steered for the boreal stars,
And, bewitched by the weird northern lights,
Cramped through ice-packs and wintered in snows
Heaped to the deck and piled to the spars,
Thou hast brought from the long arctic nights
Only one, and him famished and froze:
Fame! my Helmsman! Anatomy thin
Propt to the wheel, stark Helmsman, sail in.

Ship! that went out to traffic with Ind,
Hugged the Gold Coast, and doubled Good Hope,
When full sail on the Asian sea,
Thou wast caught by a contrary wind
And blown down the world's southerly slope
And thence upward and hither to me:
Ship, whose lading did never begin,
With this moonshine for cargo! sail in.

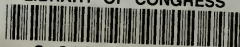
Ship! that searched round the world for new lands,
Sounded new seas and charted new skies,
Studied new stars, new sights of the sun,
Then plowed keel in the ooze and the sands—
There in shallows thy mystery lies,
When all the deeps thy sailing has done:
Psyche wove but the Parcae did spin
Warp and woof of thy sail sailing in.

Ship! that struck the horizon's sea-line
And there vanished away in the blue,
Seemed that thy sail went into the sky,
And not down the east ocean's decline:
Is naught, then, but the underworld true,
And yon overworld naught but a lie?
Faith! my Anchor! all rusted with sin,
There on deck of this ship sailing in!

Then, as I lay there with the sick soul in my eyes,
A thundercloud that had loomed up the western skies
Went suddenly across the moon and made eclipse
That blotted all the sea and those assembling ships.

1887.

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